

27 July 2010

Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Social Security at 75 Years

Honorable Members of the Committee:

I have been a California community college teacher at Solano College for 34 years, my entire career. I am 60, still working full time and my husband, aged 63, is still working despite his recent cancer diagnosis. My husband has worked his entire career in the private sector, paying in to Social Security since 1964, for the last 20 years at the maximum rate. Over the course of his long working career, my husband and his employers have contributed \$227,956 to Social Security and \$64,936 to Medicare (earnings record through 2008, 2009 figures not yet available from Social Security). In April 2008, my husband was diagnosed with stage 4, metastatic cancer and given a prognosis of 2-5 years. Because of the provisions of the Government Pension Offset, as his surviving spouse my Social Security benefit will be reduced by at least two-thirds of the value of my California State Teachers' Retirement System retirement benefit and potentially I could receive no spousal retirement benefit from Social Security. The loss of this retirement income, funds my husband faithfully paid to provide for his and my retirement, will be devastating for me and our 24-year-old daughter, who is pursuing an advanced degree fully through student loans. To face significant financial worries – the potential loss of our family home, the inability to meet medical expenses including eventual Medicare premiums (teachers are not part of Social Security and Medicare) – at the same time our family is dealing with the illness and ultimate loss of our family member is distressing; the colossal unfairness of the GPO is awful.

I urge Congress to redress this profound economic injustice by passing the Social Security Fairness Act. Surely this attempt at righting an economic wrong is a matter both sides of the aisle can agree upon. Please act now; your constituents are depending on you!

Respectfully,

Gail Elizabeth Kropp
CA